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DIA FOR LEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2019

TAGS: [KACT](#) [MARR](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#) [US](#) [START](#)

SUBJECT: START FOLLOW-ON NEGOTIATIONS, GENEVA (SFO-GVA-VI):
(S) REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE --009; SSGN TRANSPARANCY

REF: A. GENEVA 00976 (SFO-GVA-VI-037)
[1](#)B. STATE 107748 (SFO-VI-GUIDANCE-001)
[1](#)C. GENEVA 00977 (SFO-GVA-VI-038)

Classified By: A/S Rose E. Gottemoeller, United States
START Negotiator. Reasons: 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is SFO-GVA-VI-054 -- Request for Guidance-009.

SUMMARY AND GUIDANCE REQUESTED

[1](#)2. (S) The delegation requests clarification regarding future Russian Federation transparency measures for U.S. SSGNs. The package deal presented to the Russian Federation in Moscow offered a one-time exhibition for each of four SSGNs to confirm that their launch tubes have been converted to render them incapable of launching an SLBM. Following the one-time exhibition the SSGNs would be excluded from the limits on strategic delivery vehicles. This offer is entirely consistent with procedures offered to confirm completion of future SSBN conversions.

[1](#)3. (S) While the Russian side clearly considers the SSGNs in a different status than the Peacekeeper ICBM system, the B-52G, or the remaining nuclear capable B-1B heavy bombers, none of which have completed an elimination or conversion process, the Russian Federation has repeatedly indicated there should be continuing opportunities to view the converted SSGNs throughout the life of the new treaty.

[1](#)4. (S) The delegation understands the U.S. will wait for the

Russian response to the package deal before taking further action, but conscious of the short time remaining before START expiration, requests Washington consider an appropriate response if the U.S. is pressed to agree to periodic exhibitions to confirm the SSGNs are not being reconverted, similar to the offer made regarding B-1Bs.

¶5. (U) Background is provided in paragraphs 6-10, analysis is provided in paragraphs 11-15. Recommendation is in paragraph 16. Guidance requested is in paragraph 17.

BACKGROUND

¶6. (S) Ref A reports U.S offer for a package solution that was presented in Moscow by General Jones (NSA) and subsequently presented to the Russian delegation in Geneva that includes excluding delivery vehicles currently counted in START but no longer part of U.S. strategic forces. Under the Moscow Package the four SSGNs will each be subject to a one-time exhibition to demonstrate that launch tubes have been converted to render them incapable of launching an SLBM and that changes cannot be reversed without major work done in a shipyard.

¶7. (S) Ref A also contains the stipulation that the B-1B heavy bombers will be subject to yearly inspections once the conversion of the entire fleet has been completed to confirm they have not been reconverted. Ref B was more specific, offering a notional method of conducting these

confidence-building measures for converted heavy bombers.

¶8. (S) Ref B states the Delegation is authorized to agree that converted items would remain subject to the Treaty's verification regime, as long as the Russian side agrees that such items would not be counted under any of the SFO Treaty's central limits.

¶9. (S) During informal discussions on the side of the Inspection Protocol Working Group meetings, the Russian side has discussed its desire for future opportunities to visit the SSGNs. Additionally, during early discussions regarding the package offer, the Russian delegation questioned the U.S. regarding its lack of a follow-on verification regime for the SSGNs (Ref C).

¶10. (S) Delegation notes that in principle, given enough time and money, any physical modification to a strategic platform can be reversed (Ref C,).

ANALYSIS

¶11. (S) Should the Russian Federation accept the Moscow Package Offer, each of four U.S. SSGNs will be subjected to a one-time exhibition to confirm their missile tubes are no longer capable of launching an SLBM. Under the offer, upon completion of the exhibitions the SSGNs will be excluded from the limits of the treaty. (Note: Delegation understands that the offer appears to exclude the SSGNs from the 'limits', not the 'limitations' of the treaty, although delegation is not certain this distinction was intended. The translation of the U.S. offer into Russian makes it clear that it is specifically the Article II central 'limits' from which the SSGNs would be excluded. End Note) The Delegation expects the Russian Federation to accept this exhibition as a means to confirm the conversion was complete, but consistent with their position to this date, RF will likely seek the right to attend further periodic exhibitions of SSGNs to confirm they have not been reconverted for strategic use. The RF will likely argue this right is consistent with their negotiating position to date and with the U.S. offer for periodic follow-on exhibitions of converted B-1Bs and B-1B airbases.

¶12. (S) Continuing exhibitions of SSGNs after the completion

of the one-time exhibitions are problematic for the following reasons: First, modification of the SSGNs was completed well within the lifetime of the original START Treaty, and they will begin the START follow-on era as platforms incapable of employing nuclear strategic offensive arms. Furthermore, the Trident I (C-4) missile which was deployed on these submarines is no longer deployed and will not be listed in the SFO Treaty as an existing type of SOA. Second, SSGNs operate with a remote-theater crew turnover concept wherein each ship spends prolonged periods away from its home port in the United States. This would make it very difficult to exhibit the SSGNs, especially since their brief returns to home port are filled with intense maintenance activities. Remote theater crew turnover would also complicate scheduling these viewings, and resolving scheduling issues by sharing details of operational SSGN schedules is unacceptable. Finally, the significant and prolonged effort required to re-convert an SSGN in a shipyard would be clearly visible to

national technical means of verification by the Russian side, which obviates the need for on-site observation to confirm that no reconversion has occurred.

¶13. (S) Although the U.S. is currently accustomed to periodically exhibiting a selected SSGN tube in conjunction with re-entry vehicle on-site inspections under START, the delegation also notes a practical objection to any effort to extend these opportunities to the Russian Federation under SFO. The SSGNs have established themselves as valuable experimental platforms during the past year, testing a wide range of next-generation weapons and sensors. Opening them up to periodic on-board inspection by the Russian Federation could require substantial effort and expense to prevent compromise of new capabilities and technologies being tested on these ships, although it would not likely prove to be an insurmountable problem.

¶14. (S) The U.S. position for Round VII of the negotiations remains that the Russian side will have one opportunity to view each of the SSGNs as part of the transition to the new SFO verification regime, as outlined in the Ref A discussion of delivery vehicles counted in START but no longer part of U.S. strategic forces.

¶15. (S) In spite of many sound reasons why follow-on exhibitions should not be agreed to, the practice of providing periodic exhibitions of the converted SSGNs as a means of reassuring Russia that they have not be reconverted has significant appeal as a confidence building measure consistent with the increased transparency the U.S. seeks in conjunction with the implementation of the START follow-on treaty.

RECOMMENDATION

¶16. (S) Delegation recommends Washington consider Refs A, B and C, and the associated issues with offering periodic SSGN transparency measures, to include allowing periodic exhibitions throughout the anticipated life of the SFO Treaty following the one-time exhibition of each SSGN.

GUIDANCE REQUESTED

¶17. (S) Delegation requests Washington clarify Delegation instructions vis--vis exhibitions of SSGNs following completion of the one-time exhibitions offered in the Moscow Package Deal.

¶18. (U) Ries sends.
GRIFFITHS